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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 002518

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [EUN](#) [USEU](#) [BRUSSELS](#)

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN ELECTIONS: NEGATIVE ON EUROPE, NOT ON U.S.

REF: A. A) BRUSSELS 1736

[B. B\) BRUSSELS 2107](#)

[C. C\) BRUSSELS 2196](#)

[D. D\) BRUSSELS 2360](#)

Classified By: USEU POLOFF TODD HUIZINGA, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1.](#) (U) SUMMARY: The provisional results of the June 10-13 European elections largely confirm the status quo: in a European Parliament (EP) that remains a complex amalgam of parties, nationalities and personalities, the Christian Democrats and Conservatives group (EPP-ED) keeps its plurality. The Socialists and Social Democrats (PES) remain the second largest EP group. The Liberal Democrats (ELDR) -- who may form the nucleus of a new "centrist" group -- stay in third place, with the Greens in fourth and the far left in fifth. Relations with the U.S. (i.e., Iraq) played a role, but the vote was mainly about Europe and sitting governments. Voters delivered a largely negative report card on governments in their respective member states, and the lowest-ever turnout of 45.5 percent revealed, at least in part, apathy toward the EU. END SUMMARY.

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CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ON TOP  
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[12.](#) (U) Based on party-group membership in the previous term, provisional results show the EPP-ED with 275 out of a total of 732 seats (37.6 percent). The PES has 200 seats (27.3 percent), the ELDR 66 (9.0 percent), the Greens 41 (5.6 percent), and the far-left EUL/NGL 36 (5.0 percent). These numbers will change considerably as negotiations on party group membership proceed, but we do not expect the changes to affect the balance among the largest party groups.

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NEW POSSIBILITIES ON CENTER AND FAR-RIGHT  
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[13.](#) (U) The two greatest possibilities for significant change in the party-group make-up of the EP reside on the center and the far right of the political spectrum. In the center, if the ELDR forms a new "EU-federalist" group with the center-left Olive Tree Coalition of European Commission President Romano Prodi and the French Union for French Democracy (ref D) -- as ELDR leader Graham Watson reiterated publicly on election night -- the membership of that group could increase by up to 32 seats. With between 95 and 100 seats, this enlarged ELDR would be far and away the strongest EP "third force." It would not be enough for either a center-right majority with the EPP-ED or a center-left majority with the PES, but it would be an important, often indispensable element nevertheless in getting over the 50 percent hurdle. On the far right, groups such as the French Front National, the Belgian Vlaams Blok and others, currently non-aligned, may try to come together to form a party group. If they succeed, the organized far right in the EP could have numbers comparable to the Greens and the far left.

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A BAD REPORT CARD FOR EU AND MEMBER STATES  
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[14.](#) (U) As far as can be generalized in analyzing what were in effect 25 distinct member-state elections, the vote was principally about domestic concerns such as unemployment and health care. It was a negative report card for sitting member-state governments primarily, and the EU itself secondarily. With the exception of Spain and Greece, in which recently elected governing parties did well, initial tallies were generally dim for governing parties in the member states. The results in Germany and France especially were disastrous for the incumbent governments, with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) receiving only about 22 percent of the vote in Germany and French President Chirac's party obtaining 16 to 17 percent. In the UK, the Labour party received about 22 percent compared to approximately 27 percent for the Conservatives. The euroskeptic UK Independence Party (UKIP) was spectacularly successful, with about 17 percent of the vote. In Italy, the Olive Tree Coalition of European Commission President Romano Prodi appears to have won 27 seats, while Prime Minister Silvio

Berlusconi's Forza Italia won 17 seats.

15. (U) The vote also revealed continuing voter apathy toward the EP, and significant dissatisfaction with the EU. This was reflected above all in the record low turnout of about 45.5 percent. Especially striking was the extremely low figure of around 29 percent voter participation in the ten new member states. Euroskeptic parties did especially well in the UK (see para 4 above), Poland and the Czech Republic. In the Netherlands and Austria voters rewarded candidates running on anti-corruption platforms.

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IRAQ PLAYS ROLE, BUT VOTE EUROPE-CENTERED  
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16. (SBU) Relations with the United States, i.e. Iraq, did play a role in the vote, but not as great a role as domestic and European concerns. Prodi's Olive Tree Coalition, which ran on a peace platform, did well in Italy. In the UK, Labour's poor showing was certainly connected to the Blair government's support of the U.S. in Iraq, but the Liberal Democrats, who made their opposition to the Iraq war the centerpiece of their campaign, received an unimpressive 15 percent of the vote. Comparing this to the strong showing of the UKIP indicates that the vote in Great Britain was more anti-EU than a protest of UK involvement in Iraq. The German, French and Belgian governing parties all did very poorly, failing to profit from their opposition to U.S. Iraq policy.

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COMMENT: EP KEEPS ITS MANY FACES  
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16. (C) Much could happen as party group negotiations progress, but the bottom line is that the balance of power in the EP will remain approximately what it was in the last term. The EPP-ED is the largest group, but still holds less than 40 percent of the seats. On the left, the PES, Greens and the far left do not form a majority. This means that an enlarged ELDR, if it comes into being, will be a key element in forming majorities. Unfortunately, the ELDR often opposes the U.S. on key foreign policy issues such as Iraq and aspects of the war on terrorism such as detaining enemy combatants in Guantanamo and sharing passenger name record data with the U.S. In EP sense-of-Congress resolutions, the EP's preference for the broadest possible consensus -- and the resulting tendency to include potshots at U.S. policy which are popular with the center and the left-- will continue. All in all, the EP will remain a complex mix, leaning toward opposition to U.S. policy in many areas, but differing from issue to issue, party group to party group, and MEP to MEP. END COMMENT.

SCHNABEL